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HOMEMAkers' CHAT

Wednesday - April 2, 1941

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "CHEEPS AND CACKLES ON THE FARM." Information from the Farm Security Administration. U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

It's baby chick time, isn't it? Indeed, some people started baby chicks a long time ago. Maybe you did, or some of your neighbors. But early Spring is really the time for most people, so we'll talk about baby chicks today. The Farm Security Administration is our source of information, and is going to tell us how some of its borrower families are starting this year's poultry flock. Poultry-raising, you know, is mighty good business on a farm..... means lots of good meat and eggs, and protects the health as well as the purse, while it may also add to the family income.

Nowadays, many families buy ready-hatched chicks and others use incubators at home. But some folks who must economize to the limit, and are willing to work a little harder, still look to "Mother Hen" - particularly if their flocks are small. To insure a good hatch, and healthy chicks, they start with the selection of eggs. They try to get eggs from a good breed of chickens, and often from purebreds. If their own flocks are not good enough, they may trade eggs with a neighbor who has a better flock, or offer some of the new chicks to be hatched, in exchange.

These people are also careful in choosing the type of eggs they set - that is, they take only those normal in size, shape, color, and shell texture. They never pick unusually large or small eggs, or eggs too long or too round, or off-shaped or deformed in some other way. They don't take eggs with ridges or rough places in them, or with soft, porous shells, or with even the tiniest crack.



Also, they don't choose soiled eggs and they never wash hatching eggs.

Washing eggs, you know, destroys the little protective coating over the shells and lets bacteria in to spoil them. But it's all right to use a dull knife or sandpaper or steel wool to clean them..... Eggs for setting should be handled carefully, never roughly. They should be kept in a well-ventilated place not too hot or too cold, should be kept away from oil or grease, or strong odors like kerosene or gasoline, and should not be more than a week old when set. 'Sounds like a lot of fuss and bother about eggs, doesn't it? But care like this really increases your chances for a good hatch.

Many people provide a separate little shed or alcove to set their hens in. This way they can keep them away from other chickens, and can keep feed and water before them all the time. Mixed grains are good food for setting hens - grains such as barley, wheat, milo, and corn.....

Then comes hatching time. Some three weeks after setting the eggs you can hardly wait to see how many shells are going to open up and give away their secrets. Pretty soon maybe you'll have a whole flock of fluffy baby chicks..... all ready for the brooder house.

The brooder house..... Yes..... Is yours all ready? If not, it's high time it were. Maybe you have an old house to fix up, or will build a new one. There are lots of ways to improve an old one, you know. For example, if the roof is too high, you can make a straw loft. A straw loft is good in a chicken house anyway - makes a house cooler in summer and warmer in winter. To build one, you just put several boards or poles lengthwise of the house and lay slats across them - or stretch wire netting over them, to hold the straw. Some people insulate a drafty house with pasteboard from old boxes, and say it is very satisfactory.

Of course it's important to have a brand-spanking CLEAN house for young chicks. You should scrub it from top to bottom, every crack and crevice, with some strong solution. A pound of lye in ten gallons of boiling water is a good homemade





solution. Then let the house dry and sun for several days. You can improve the chicken run too, by putting a few inches of gravel over it. And you might make a sun porch onto the chicken house if the chicks are likely to be indoors much.

Or maybe you're thinking of a new house. If so fine. Look first of all for a good location - if possible a NEW location where chickens have never been raised before. That way you'll be sure not to run into old disease germs or parasite-infested ground.

And you'll probably build your own house, won't you? Many people do, and save considerable money. A farmer in Uvalde County, Texas took some second-hand lumber and made a brooder house he said "could do everything a Mother Hen could do but cluck." He made a box - 8 by 12 feet, and a foot high - and left an alley way through the center. He also left a space between the sides and roof to be filled in with cloth scraps and to keep the house warm and aid in ventilation. Last of all, he put gunny sacks on the floor to make a removable covering.

Other families have made brooder houses from native rock or cobblestone, from old bricks, discarded automobile tops, logs they have cut on the farm, or lumber they have sawed on shares at a mill. The important thing is to make a clean, comfortable place, free from drafts and dampness and safe from varmints. Floors can be of wood or concrete, and even of dirt if local weather conditions permit. Every floor should be covered with a good litter, such as straw, shavings, crushed corncobs, cane pulp, and even sand or sawdust. All should be changed often and not let get damp or moldy.

Hadn't you better make some roosts for the chickens too? Young chicks should be taught to roost as soon as possible to keep them off the floor and from crowding each other. A good way to encourage early roosting is to make low perches - maybe wire-covered - and later exchange them for higher ones. All roosts should be built on a framework, and made movable if possible so they can be taken out and aired.....

Well, in our talk today we've heard about the first steps in home poultry-raising, as some of the Farm Security Administration families practice them. We've heard about selecting the eggs, setting the hens, hatching the chicks, and providing the brooder house. And while some of the suggestions were not new, others may be very helpful..... and even help us count some of our chickens before they are hatched.

